



January 21, 2014

### Agenda:

- Project Lead applications due
- Article of the Week—"DayZ's 1 million sales: A 'shots fired' moment for publishers" (Gamasutra)
  - [http://gamasutra.com/view/news/208685/DayZs\\_1\\_million\\_sales\\_A\\_shots\\_fired\\_moment\\_for\\_publishers.php](http://gamasutra.com/view/news/208685/DayZs_1_million_sales_A_shots_fired_moment_for_publishers.php)
- Global Game Jam recap

## **DayZ's 1 million sales: A 'shots fired moment' for publishers** by Christian Nutt

The standalone version of PC zombie survival game *DayZ* has proven to be a breakout success, [selling over 1 million copies](#) in a month. That would be impressive enough, but it's even more exciting when you take into account that the game is still deep in development, and being sold exclusively via Steam Early Access, as an alpha-funded project.

Gamasutra speaks with creative lead Dean Hall about this unexpected success -- "way, way beyond" his expectations, [he said on Twitter](#). But we also speak about what his triumph changes for his project, for the industry at large, and what drives the success he's seen so far.

## **You've done much better than you expected at the outset. Care to theorize about why?**

Dean Hall: I think the main reason is that the concept was strong, and was something that gamers really wanted. The idea of an open-world game that is less about the game itself, as it is about the players' interactions with each other in it.

Players are very social, very mobile, and very eager to discuss their experiences with each other. *DayZ* fit in very nicely with these changes, through Twitter, Reddit, forums, and new platforms such as Twitch. In addition to this strong concept, at the right time, this was the right approach.

I think our commitment to doing right by the concept and being honest about our development fits well with the new challenges that social media provides. People had a reasonable idea what to expect, and we were honest about our shortcomings. I think these things all combined resulted in strong sales.



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## **How have you seen the community form around *DayZ*, and what would you highlight as the most important moments or elements of that community coming together?**

DH: The community has seen a huge amount of change since *DayZ* first took off. I remember when it first released, the strongest core was actually on 4chan, and you could argue that it was actually 4chan which really promoted and pushed *DayZ* into the world.

It then spread out among different forums, with Reddit being one of the last areas to really pick it up. Since then, Reddit has become a very big part of the *DayZ* community for some.

I believe that the YouTube and streaming communities are some of the most key to *DayZ*, as they represent a really exciting new area of video games for me: The idea that gamers can actually become "famous" within the games themselves and develop their own followings.

We have many organizations that have grown up around the *DayZ* mod. Some of these have been very restricted by the release of the stand-alone, as we had to lock things down to provide better security. This is disappointing for us, but it is a necessary step. We really want to support the development of the specialty communities when we can in the future.

## **You talked about accelerating development due to your success. How feasible is it really to speed up development of a game like this -- how much comes from natural discovery as the community interacts with it?**

DH: I suppose this really remains to be seen. I think the pace at which we developed already, and the fact we didn't fail miserably, is really quite remarkable in itself. We took some very big risks with development, reengineering major aspects of the engine in a very short space of time.

Later this month, we are doing a reassessment of the project together with confirming our roadmap. This will be a chance for us to sit down and we can decide just how much we should be aiming to grow.



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Of course, there are the inevitable questions about ports both to consoles and to other operating systems.

Much of the growth of the design itself, as you note, [comes from feedback we get from the gamers](#). This is much easier to deal with; the hard part is growing and managing the team to be able to deliver what we identify that we want.

## **In your opinion is this a "no way back" moment for game development? Is this a fundamental change and is the traditional model of making/releasing games effectively dead? (Maybe not for all audiences, but still!)**

DH: I think if I was a publisher coming back from holidays, the success we made on a modest budget with no marketing must be a stinging blow and a very worrying sign.

Prior to our alpha release success, I think it was easy to write the *DayZ* experience off as a kind of anomaly. It was possible to think that this would not fully translate to the retail game, that the hype had gone, and that it would be business as usual. But I think 1 million sales in a month in such a specific market, at Christmas, with no marketing... that's got to be a "shots fired" moment for game publishers. If you take a look on Steam right now, I see *DayZ* on number 1 and *Rust* on number 2. That's not a slap in the face to the traditional publishing model -- it's a baseball bat at full swing.

I know for me, it says to me that I really can make the games I dreamed of a reality. People want these kinds of games and I don't need to convince traditional publishers the customer wants them. I just have to convince the customers. This was a watershed moment for me, but I can't say how others will receive it.

## **So from the beginning of the *DayZ* standalone development till the public release of the alpha, what has been the biggest surprise or lesson you've learned?**



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DH: Probably how much people will forgive mistakes if you're honest and you make the effort to grow beyond those mistakes. I'm not just talking about customers; I'm talking about everyone around you.

It had been a tough year for me and I think at times that made me very difficult to work with. That's made for some difficult apologies, but people have always been understanding.

I've really learned to lean on the people around me in the industry. Many people reached out to me with help and advice, expecting nothing in return. This has been more valuable than anything and I think I've learned to really make the most of that.

I've formed friendships with people that I might traditionally have seen as competitors, and as a result I think all of our games have benefited from it. Probably the most important lessons I've learned have been in game design itself, ones that I hope make me a better game designer in future.